

LONGLEAF STEWARDSHIP FUND

2019 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Full Proposal Due Date: **Thursday, February 7th, 2019 by 11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time**

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is soliciting proposals to expand and enhance longleaf pine ecosystem restoration and management across longleaf pine’s historical range, as well as the restoration and enhancement of bottomland hardwood forests within priority focal areas. The Longleaf Stewardship Fund is a landmark public-private partnership supported with Federal funding from USDA’s Forest Service (FS) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); the Department of Defense (DOD); the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS); and, private funding from International Paper’s Forestland Stewards Partnership, Southern Company, Altria Group, the American Forest Foundation’s Southern Woods for At-Risk Wildlife Partnership, and The Orton Foundation, an affiliate of The Moore Charitable Foundation, founded by Louis Bacon. At least \$5 million in grant funds is expected to be available in 2019.

Hurricanes Florence and Michael heavily impacted significant areas of the longleaf pine range. Proposals that address hurricane impacts to longleaf pine habitat and longleaf-associated species will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Priority will be given to projects that address habitat and species recovery efforts on longleaf sites previously supported through the Longleaf Stewardship Fund. Please contact Jon Scott (jonathan.scott@nfwf.org) to discuss projects.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS AND ELIGIBLE ECOSYSTEMS

To be eligible for funding, projects must occur within historic range or priority focal areas as depicted on Map 1 as follows:

- A) **Longleaf Pine:** Historical range within AL, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, SC, TX or VA.
- B) **Bottomland Hardwoods:** Focal areas identified in LA, NC, SC or TX.

A more detailed map can be viewed here: [Interactive Map](#).



PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The Longleaf Stewardship Fund is guided primarily by three strategic drivers:

- 1) Supporting the implementation of NFWF’s [Longleaf Forests and Rivers Business Plan](#) which lays out NFWF’s strategic priorities and goals to restore and enhance longleaf pine forest ecosystems. Four species are targeted within the Business Plan: red-cockaded woodpecker, gopher tortoise, Bachman’s sparrow, and Northern bobwhite quail. These four species were selected as indicators of healthy longleaf ecosystems and represent the habitat needs of a broader suite of species dependent upon this system.

2) Supporting longleaf pine ecosystem restoration and enhancement on public and private lands through collaborative, on-the-ground actions that contribute to the strategic restoration goals in the [Range-Wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine](#), developed by the [America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative](#) (ALRI). The three-year priorities and actions to advance these goals are outlined in ALRI's [Strategic Priorities and Actions](#) document.

3) Supporting the implementation of bottomland hardwood restoration and enhancement strategies identified in NFWF's [Forestland Stewards Business Plan](#) for the benefit of wildlife species and freshwater systems, while promoting and supporting working forests. Bottomland hardwood focal areas are located within the Coastal Plain of North and South Carolina ([map](#)), as well as the piney woods region of east Texas and west Louisiana ([map](#)).

Funding Priorities: Priority will be given to projects that effectively implement one or more of the strategies below to improve longleaf pine and bottomland hardwood habitats and populations of associated wildlife species, including red-cockaded woodpecker, gopher tortoise, Bachman's sparrow, and Northern bobwhite quail, as well as songbirds, waterfowl, reptiles and amphibians.

1) Establishing Longleaf Pine and/or Bottomland Hardwood Forests: NFWF will invest in projects that create new longleaf pine and/or bottomland hardwood habitat, including site preparation and planting on public and private lands. Priority will be given to projects in areas adjacent or in close proximity to existing longleaf and/or bottomland hardwood stands under conservation management, known habitat for associated threatened, endangered or at-risk species, and/or on protected lands likely to receive long-term management. Projects should:

- Describe all necessary site preparation for planting and summarize plans to promote long-term sustainability and maintenance of restored forests (e.g., mechanical and/or chemical treatments, prescribed burning, etc.).

2) Enhancing and Maintaining Existing Longleaf Pine and/or Bottomland Hardwood Ecosystems: NFWF will invest in projects that maintain, expand and promote effective management of existing longleaf pine and/or bottomland hardwood forest habitats on public and private lands through the use of management treatments, including, but not limited to the following:

For Longleaf Pine:

Prescribed Burning

- Increase prescribed fire capacity, coordination and collaboration through fire teams, prescribed burn associations, or other appropriate strategies.
- Provide technical assistance, training and/or other incentives to increase prescribed burning on private lands, including, but not limited to assisting USDA Area Office staff in writing burn plans and implementing financial assistance contracts through NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Working Lands for Wildlife and other programs.
- Increase prescribed burning and management on public lands.
- Pursue innovations and address specific barriers or roadblocks to prescribed burning, including strategies that may be transferred across the longleaf range.

Other Silvicultural Treatments

Where prescribed fire is not sufficient or practical for achieving longleaf ecosystem restoration, the following additional treatments may be considered. Applicants must demonstrate how these treatments contribute towards long-term sustainable longleaf ecosystem restoration and maintenance, including how they will enable future prescribed burning as a management practice. Silvicultural treatments on stands where longleaf is not currently the dominant tree species is permitted where such treatments will result in conversion to a longleaf dominated forest¹.

- Overstory treatments aimed at reducing over-story tree density, improving over-story structure, release of longleaf regeneration, or to implement uneven-aged or patch-cut silviculture treatments.
- Mid-story treatments including mechanical and chemical treatments to remove or control mid-story hardwood or pine encroachment.
- Planting native understory species to improve wildlife habitat and support the application of prescribed fire.
- Non-native invasive species treatments including herbicide or mechanical single or multiple treatments to control non-native, invasive plant species.

For Bottomland Hardwoods:

- Maintaining and enhancing planted acreage or natural stands.
- Supporting regeneration through invasive species control or intermediate thinning.
- Additional under-planting as necessary.

3) Expanding and Coordinating Private Landowner Technical Assistance and Outreach: Projects are sought to implement collaborative and strategic outreach and technical assistance to increase the number of private landowners engaged in longleaf pine and/or bottomland hardwood restoration and stewardship practices. Proposals must estimate the amount of acres to be restored or enhanced as a result of proposed activities.

- **Increase outreach and technical assistance delivery success:** Support landowner outreach and technical assistance that contribute to the increased delivery of on-the-ground longleaf restoration. Proposals should describe the current technical assistance capacity and explain plans for prioritizing, targeting and leveraging additional capacity. This should include how existing financial assistance programs will be utilized and how the increased technical assistance capacity will be coordinated among existing providers. Strategies may include:
 - Hiring additional staff or contractors, based on demonstrated need, including staff to assist NRCS with developing forest management and burn plans and implementation of existing and new financial assistance contracts.
 - Developing landscape-based partnerships to implement innovative methods to engage private landowners and expand on-the-ground restoration and protection activities on private lands, such as utilizing social marketing and landowner preferences data to identify and better understand landowner motivations and barriers to sustainable forest management.
 - Targeting outreach to landowners and working with NRCS and other partners to prioritize, plan and deliver financial assistance, such as EQIP, Working Lands for Wildlife and other programs to improve habitat and support at-risk species.
- **Advance new market-based and/or incentive programs:** Pilot innovative, market-based solutions and/or incentive programs that stimulate landowner participation in longleaf recovery efforts and

¹ Longleaf dominated forests includes both longleaf pine forest type (pine ≥ 50% of live tree stocking and longleaf pine is most common pine species) and mixed longleaf pine-oak forest (pine 25-50% of live tree stocking and longleaf pine is most common pine species)

enhance on-the-ground activities to achieve longleaf pine [optimal habitat conditions](#). Projects should effectively align with other existing private landowner initiatives or programs, such as [US Fish & Wildlife Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program](#), [USDA's Working Lands for Wildlife](#), and/or DoD [Sentinel Landscapes](#), as appropriate.

- **Increase participation in third-party forest certification:** Increase participation in third-party forest certification programs to encourage sustainable forest management practices for longleaf pine ecosystem, bottomland hardwood forests, and associated wildlife.

4) Building and Improving Local Implementation Team Capacity (Significant Geographic Area (SGA) projects only): A portion of available grant funding may be allocated to strengthen Local Implementation Team (LIT) capacity to establish and/or advance a comprehensive longleaf ecosystem restoration strategy and accomplish conservation goals within defined SGAs.

Proposed capacity-building activities must be integrated as part of a larger project addressing Strategies 1-3 above. Proposals must detail how capacity investments will lead to specific measurable, on-the-ground conservation outcomes within the project period and include the following components:

- **Planning:** Develop a conservation plan² for the SGA and/or LIT that defines measurable, large-scale longleaf restoration and enhancement goals and expected conservation outcomes; detail strategic actions and target priority locations; list near-term implementation actions and associated costs; and describe methods for monitoring and evaluating progress. This plan should be completed within the grant period. A conservation plan template can be downloaded [here](#). Proposals may request funding to support conservation plan development, including, but not limited to:
 - GIS mapping to identify priority areas, establish baseline estimates of longleaf, etc.
 - Hiring a facilitator to assist with partner coordination and priority setting.

Proposals requesting support to develop a conservation plan **must** provide a summary of the status of their conservation plan, including whether previous Longleaf Stewardship Fund grant funding has been provided for planning, how those funds were used, as well as projected date of plan completion – [LIT Conservation Plan Status Template](#).

- **Coordination:** Support an LIT Coordinator position to provide overall coordination across all SGA partners, priorities and activities, and accelerate achievement of longleaf restoration and maintenance goals for the defined region. Applicants may request **no more than 50% of the LIT Coordinator's salary and benefits**. Applicants that are not able to cover the remainder of the LIT Coordinator's salary and benefits must contact NFWF to discuss a waiver to the 50% threshold prior to submitting a proposal. Requests for this type of support must include:
 - A clear work plan that outlines how the Coordinator will facilitate completing the SGA's conservation plan; as well as monitor and track progress and achievements of key activities, milestones and goals.
 - Participation in the annual and/or regional LIT Coordinator meetings to network, expand knowledge and share lessons learned.
 - Description of how the Coordinator position will be supported long-term and sustained through other financial resources.

5) Accelerating Species Recovery: As part of a larger longleaf ecosystem habitat restoration or enhancement project, implement other strategies, such as translocation, installation of nest-cavity inserts,

² For LITs which have not yet initiated the planning process, a plan template is available on the [Longleaf Stewardship Fund RFP webpage](#).

captive rearing and reintroduction, monitoring and other supporting activities to aid recovery of longleaf ecosystem-dependent species. Preference will be given to projects that contribute to the species outcomes outlined in the [Longleaf Forests and Rivers Business Plan](#) for red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW), gopher tortoise, Bachman's sparrow, and Northern bobwhite quail. Species-specific strategies that aid in the recovery of populations of other key longleaf ecosystem indicator species will also be considered. Proposals should demonstrate how activities advance implementation of established conservation strategies within federal species recovery plans, regional bird conservation plans and/or state wildlife action plans. Applicants must contact Jon Scott (jonathan.scott@nfwf.org) prior to applying for species-specific strategies to discuss the project's geographic location, proposed activities, and plans to monitor project outcomes.

6) Conservation Easements (for LA, TX and NC/SC Coastal Plain SGA projects only):

Funding is available to facilitate targeted conservation easement projects that protect existing, high-quality longleaf pine and bottomland hardwood habitat, or key sites targeted for longleaf and bottomland hardwood restoration that are part of a broader restoration proposal.

Requests for conservation easement funding should not exceed 15% of the total proposal request and should be for transaction costs, such as surveys, appraisal, environmental report, etc. In limited instances, highly leveraged projects will be considered for acquisition costs. Please contact Jon Scott (jonathan.scott@nfwf.org) to discuss specific land conservation projects.

PROJECT METRICS AND OUTCOMES

The Longleaf Stewardship Fund seeks to achieve the following conservation outcomes this grant round. Targets represent approximate annual restoration goals as outlined in the [Longleaf Forests and Rivers Business Plan](#):

- Improve populations of red-cockaded woodpecker, gopher tortoise, Bachman's sparrow, and Northern bobwhite quail through species-specific strategies and by providing and sustaining [optimal longleaf habitat conditions](#)³ that in turn benefit a broad suite of at-risk, threatened and endangered species.
- Establish an additional 14,000 to 16,000 acres of longleaf pine on public and private lands.
- Maintain or enhance through prescribed burning 250,000 to 275,000 acres of longleaf on public and private lands.
- Maintain or enhance through other silvicultural treatments (other than prescribed fire) 10,000 to 15,000 acres of longleaf on public and private lands.
- Conserve 500 to 1,500 acres of longleaf habitat with conservation easements.
- Involve more than 500 private landowners in longleaf stewardship practices that directly contribute to the restoration, enhancement and wildlife objectives described above, and support working forests by demonstrating their environmental and socioeconomic benefits.

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the *Longleaf Stewardship Fund* has a list of metrics (Table 1) in Easygrants for grantees to choose from for reporting. We ask that you select only the most relevant metrics from this list for your project. Please contact Jon Scott (jonathan.scott@nfwf.org) if you have questions about which metrics best apply to your project.

³ Longleaf Pine Maintenance Condition Class Definitions: A Guide to Assess Optimal Forest Habitat Conditions for Associated Plant and Wildlife Species. America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative - Longleaf Partnership Council. April 4, 2014.

Table 1: Project Metrics

Project Activity	Recommended Metric (as listed in Easygrants)	Additional Guidance
Strategy 1. Establishing Longleaf Pine and/or Bottomland Hardwood Forests		
Acres of longleaf pine planted on private lands	LLSF - Longleaf Pine - Land restoration - Acres restored on private lands through plantings	Enter the total acres of longleaf pine established through plantings on private lands. For projects that include outcomes in multiple states, please breakout acreage by state in the notes section (estimates are acceptable).
Acres of longleaf pine planted on public lands	LLSF - Longleaf Pine - Land restoration - Acres restored on public lands through plantings	Enter the total acres of longleaf pine established through plantings on public lands. For projects that include outcomes in multiple states, please breakout acreage by state in the notes section (estimates are acceptable).
# of longleaf seedlings planted on private lands	LLSF - Longleaf Pine - Land, wetland restoration - # of trees planted on private lands	Enter the total number of longleaf pine seedlings planted on private lands.
# of longleaf seedlings planted on public lands	LLSF - Longleaf Pine - Land, wetland restoration - # of trees planted on public lands	Enter the total number of longleaf pine seedlings planted on public lands.
Acres of bottomland hardwoods planted on private lands	LLSF - Bottomland Hardwoods - Land restoration - Acres restored on private land	Enter the total acres of bottomland hardwoods planted on private lands. <u>This strategy and metric is limited to projects within the Coastal Carolinas or Piney Woods of Louisiana and Texas.</u> For projects that include outcomes in multiple states, please breakout acreage by state in the notes section (estimates are acceptable).
Acres of bottomland hardwoods planted on public lands	LLSF - Bottomland Hardwoods - Land restoration - Acres restored on public land	Enter the total acres of bottomland hardwoods planted on public lands. <u>This strategy and metric is limited to projects within the Coastal Carolinas or Piney Woods of Louisiana and Texas.</u> For projects that include outcomes in multiple states, please breakout acreage by state in the notes section (estimates are acceptable).
Strategy 2. Enhancing and Maintaining Existing Longleaf Pine and/or Bottomland Hardwood Ecosystems		
Acres of longleaf pine gained on private lands through silvicultural manipulation	LLSF - Longleaf Pine - Land restoration - Acres restored on private lands through silvicultural manipulation	Enter the total acres of longleaf pine gained through silvicultural manipulation on private lands. For projects that include outcomes in multiple states, please breakout acreage by state in the notes section (estimates are acceptable).
Acres of longleaf pine gained on public lands through silvicultural manipulation	LLSF - Longleaf Pine - Land restoration - Acres restored on public lands through silvicultural manipulation	Enter the total acres of longleaf pine gained through silvicultural manipulation on public lands. For projects that include outcomes in multiple



		states, please breakout acreage by state in the notes section (estimates are acceptable).
Acres of longleaf pine burned on private lands	LLSF - Longleaf Pine - BMP implementation for prescribed burns - Acres private land burned	Enter the number of acres of prescribed burning completed on longleaf pine habitat on private lands. Include site prep burning in this metric. For projects that include outcomes in multiple states, please breakout acreage by state in the notes section (estimates are acceptable).
Acres of longleaf pine burned on public lands	LLSF - Longleaf Pine - BMP implementation for prescribed burns - Acres public land burned	Enter the number of acres of prescribed burning completed on longleaf pine habitat on public lands. Include site prep burning in this metric. For projects that will cover multiple states, please breakout acreage by state in the notes section (estimates are acceptable). For projects that include outcomes in multiple states, please breakout acreage by state in the notes section (estimates are acceptable).
Acres of other longleaf silvicultural treatments on private lands	LLSF - Longleaf Pine - Improved management practices - Acres under imp mgt (private)	Enter the number of acres of over-story treated, mid-story treated, native understory established, and/or non-native, invasive plant species treated within existing longleaf pine habitat on private lands. Acres treated with prescribed fire should not be included in this total. An acre is to be reported on only one time, even if subjected to more than one treatment.
Acres of other longleaf silvicultural treatments on public lands	LLSF - Longleaf Pine - Improved management practices - Acres under imp mgt (public)	Enter the number of acres of over-story treated, mid-story treated, native understory established, and/or non-native, invasive plant species treated within existing longleaf pine habitat on public lands. Acres treated with prescribed fire should not be included in this total. An acre is to be reported on only one time, even if subjected to more than one treatment.
Acres of bottomland hardwood treated on private lands	LLSF - Bottomland Hardwoods - Improved management practices - Acres under imp mgt (private)	Enter the total acres treated to improve or maintain existing bottomland hardwood forest on private lands. <u>This strategy and metric is limited to projects within the Coastal Carolinas or Piney Woods of Louisiana and Texas.</u> For projects that include outcomes in multiple states, please breakout acreage by state in the notes section (estimates are acceptable).
Acres of bottomland hardwood treated on public lands	LLSF - Bottomland Hardwoods - Improved management practices - Acres under imp mgt (public)	Enter the total acres treated to improve or maintain existing bottomland hardwood forest on public lands. <u>This strategy and metric is limited to projects within the Coastal Carolinas or Piney Woods of Louisiana and Texas.</u> For projects that include outcomes in multiple states, please breakout acreage by state in the notes section (estimates are acceptable).



Strategy 3. Expanding and Coordinating Private Landowner Technical Assistance and Outreach		
# landowners reached through outreach and technical assistance	LLSF - Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance - # people reached	Enter the number of private landowners engaged through technical assistance and outreach. For projects that include outcomes in multiple states, please breakout landowners reached by state in the notes section (estimates are acceptable).
# landowners taking action on their lands	LLSF - Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance - # people with changed behavior	Enter the number of private landowners who have implemented longleaf restoration actions or entered into a new incentive program contracts focusing on longleaf pine. For projects that include outcomes in multiple states, please breakout number of landowners by state in the notes section (estimates are acceptable).
Strategy 5. Accelerating Species Recovery		
# of pairs of red-cockaded woodpeckers translocated	LLSF - Red-cockaded Woodpecker - Translocation - # translocated/stocked	Enter the number of pairs of red-cockaded woodpeckers translocated.
# of individual gopher tortoises translocated and/or released	LLSF - Gopher Tortoise - Translocation - # translocated/stocked	Enter the total number of individual gopher tortoises translocated and/or released.
Strategy 6. Conservation Easements		
Acres of longleaf pine protected with conservation easement	LLSF - Longleaf Pine - Conservation easements - Acres protected under easement	Enter the number of acres of existing longleaf pine habitat that will be protected by conservation easements. This strategy and metric is limited to projects within the Coastal Carolinas and Piney Woods of Louisiana and Texas.
Acres of bottomland hardwood protected with conservation easement	LLSF - Bottomland Hardwoods - Conservation easements - Acres protected under easement	Enter the number of acres of existing bottomland hardwood habitat that will be protected by conservation easements. This strategy and metric is limited to projects within the Coastal Carolinas and Piney Woods of Louisiana and Texas.

ELIGIBILITY

- **Eligible and Ineligible Entities**
 - ✓ Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, Indian tribes, and educational institutions.
 - ✗ Ineligible applicants include U.S. Federal government agencies, businesses, unincorporated individuals, international organizations. U.S. Federal agencies, businesses and unincorporated individuals are encouraged to partner with applicants, but are not eligible to submit an application.
- **Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds**
 - ✗ NFWF funds and matching contributions may not be used to support political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities or Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations.



- ✘ NFWF funds may not be used to support ongoing efforts to comply with legal requirements, including permit conditions, mitigation and settlement agreements. However, grant funds may be used to support projects that enhance or improve upon existing baseline compliance efforts.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND MATCH

The Longleaf Stewardship Fund anticipates awarding at least \$5.0 million in grants in FY 2019. This program has one annual application cycle and awards approximately 25-28 grants per year. Grants will be awarded in one of two categories:

- 1) **Partnership-based, Large-Scale Restoration (Longleaf-Significant Geographic Areas):** Grants ranging from \$150,000 to \$300,000 will be awarded to projects submitted on behalf of a [Local Implementation Team](#) (LIT) that is working to advance longleaf pine restoration and enhancement objectives within [Significant Geographic Areas](#) (SGAs).

Grant awards up to \$450,000 may be considered for projects that: (1) are developed in partnership with the American Forest Foundation⁴ to engage private family forest owners within [priority counties](#) to implement longleaf pine and/or bottomland hardwood restoration and conservation practices that will benefit at-risk wildlife species; and/or (2) are developed in partnership with U.S. Forest Service, National Forest staff to implement priority longleaf pine restoration practices on a National Forest.

Projects in this category must directly support conservation goals and strategies embraced by relevant partners and stakeholders in these landscapes, outlined in a developing LIT/SGA conservation plan.

To promote coordination and prioritize limited funding, applicants are encouraged to collaborate on proposals and submit one comprehensive application per SGA, on behalf of an established or developing LIT. The proposal should clearly outline how the partnership's developing conservation plan is being addressed; the role of each participating partner; and, include a map of partnership priority areas identifying where proposed activities will take place during the grant period. Funding will be prioritized to those LITs with completed, or the most fully-developed conservation plans.

- 2) **Strategic Restoration and Outreach:** Grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$150,000 will be awarded for strategic, on-the-ground restoration and private landowner outreach and technical assistance that occurs within the historical longleaf range (Map 1). Strategic locations should include, but not be limited to, sites that contribute to conservation on landscapes where funding partners have other conservation activities. Any project overlapping with an SGA must demonstrate coordination with the relevant LIT (i.e., to ensure that proposed activities do not duplicate, but rather enhance or leverage existing/planned SGA activities) - [Contact Information for LITs](#).

Project Period: Anticipated completion time for funded projects typically will be 24 months following finalization of a grant agreement. Significant project deliverables and outcomes are expected to be achieved in year one. Project start and end dates should define the period during which all proposed work is accomplished, all requested funds are spent and all matching funds are spent or applied.

Match Requirement: Projects must have a minimum match of 1:1 non-federal cash or in-kind, but larger match ratios and matching fund contributions from a diversity of partners are encouraged and will be more

⁴ Applicants interested in collaborating with the American Forest Foundation should contact Greg Pate (greg.pate@fourwforestrygroup.com).



competitive.⁵ Applicants are encouraged to describe federal partner contributions as well in the proposal narrative, although those contributions will not count toward the minimum match requirement.

Work on Public Lands: Dedicated funding is available to support longleaf restoration and management on National Forests. Applicants must coordinate with the National Forest Supervisor or other appropriate National Forest staff to identify and address priorities in the proposal consistent with the applicable National Forest Plan⁶.

Limited work on other federal lands (such as National Wildlife Refuges) is eligible with the exception of the westernmost portion of the longleaf range in South Carolina (Calhoun, Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Fairfield, Greenwood, Lancaster, Lexington, Marlboro, McCormick, Newberry, Kershaw, Richland, and Saluda counties). Work performed on state and municipal-owned public land is eligible across all states within the historical longleaf range. **Projects that focus on public lands are strongly encouraged to include work on private lands as part of the broader project scope.** Please contact Jon Scott at jonathan.scott@nfwf.org to discuss potential work on public lands prior to submitting an application.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness and compliance with NFWF and funding source policies. Proposals will then be evaluated based on the extent to which they meet the following criteria.

Program Goals and Priorities – Project contributes to the Longleaf Stewardship Fund’s overall acreage, habitat, and species goals, and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics that will be tracked and measured to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the program priorities outlined in the Request for Proposals.

Conservation Plan and Context – Describe how the project fits into and advances the [Longleaf Forests and Rivers Business Plan](#) and other existing conservation plans or strategies that benefits the longleaf pine ecosystem. Projects located within the Coastal Carolinas or Piney Woods region of Texas and Louisiana and include bottomland hardwood restoration should address how the project advances the bottomland hardwood restoration priorities and acreage and species goals outlined in the [Forestland Stewards Partnership Business Plan](#). Proposals also should highlight how these efforts will expand new or existing restoration and conservation initiatives to maximize large-scale ecosystem function. Proposals submitted on behalf of an LIT/SGA under the Partnership-based, Large-Scale Restoration funding category should describe how the project will support and advance the priorities identified in a completed or developing LIT/SGA conservation plan.

Other Important Species Benefits – In addition to meeting key habitat needs for longleaf ecosystem indicator species (red-cockaded woodpecker, gopher tortoise, Bachman’s sparrow, Northern bobwhite quail), describe any significant benefits to other at-risk, threatened or endangered species, referencing any species recovery plans or other conservation plans outlining species goals as appropriate. Preference will be given to projects that include monitoring plans to track species outcomes.

⁵ Note that landowner contributions being used as match for a Longleaf Stewardship Fund grant must be outside of the amount already written into any agency cost-share contract as a cost-share contribution.

⁶ Each National Forest has developed a Forest Plan to guide its management. Consult the applicable National Forest’s website to view the most recent plan.



Technical Merit – Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear, logical and achievable work plan and timeline. Project engages appropriate technical experts throughout project planning, design and implementation to ensure activities are technically-sound and feasible.

Partnership – An appropriate partnership exists to implement the project and the project is supported by a strong local partnership that leverages additional funds and will sustain it after the life of the grant. Identify proposed partners, if known (including potential or contemplated subawards to third party subrecipients of the applicant), the roles they will play in implementing the project, and how this project will build new or enhance existing partnerships.

For SGA and/or LIT projects, this should include appropriate federal, state, local and private partners. Coordination with the military is strongly encouraged where possible (e.g., work with a local installation to support the military mission and demonstrate an understanding of the installation’s longleaf objectives). (Note: a project partner is any local community, non-profit organization, tribe, and/or local, state or federal government agency that contributes to the project in a substantial way and is closely involved in completing the project.)

Transferability – Project has potential and plan to transfer lessons learned to other communities and/or to be integrated into government programs and policies.

Communication – Project includes a detailed plan to communicate information about the project to appropriate audiences.

Funding Need – Project establishes a clear need for the funds being requested, and demonstrates that activities would not move forward absent funding.

Monitoring – Project includes a plan for monitoring progress during and after the proposed project period to track project success and adaptively address new challenges and opportunities as they arise.

Letters of Support:

- Letters of support from the applicable State Forestry office(s), highlighting how the proposed project is being coordinated with their office must be submitted for projects including state and private lands ([View state forest agency contacts](#)).
- Letter of support from the appropriate military installation/base Commander, or official designee that addresses the specific project benefits to the military mission are required for projects involving or benefitting a local military installation or base.
- Letter of support from the Forest Supervisor of the applicable National Forest is required for projects including work on a National Forest ([View National Forest contacts](#)).
- Letter from the appropriate NRCS State Conservationist acknowledging how the proposed project is being coordinated with their office must be submitted for projects including private lands ([View NRCS State Conservationist contacts](#)).
- Letters documenting the support/contributions of all other project partners are strongly encouraged.
- Projects submitted under the Strategic Restoration and Outreach funding category that overlap with an LIT/SGA(s), must provide an acknowledgement letter from the LIT(s) outlining how the project will coordinate with the LIT partners and complement or enhance existing/planned LIT/SGA activities. [Contact Information for LITs](#)



Long-term Sustainability – Project will be maintained to ensure benefits are achieved and sustained over time. This should include how future funding will be secured to implement necessary long-term monitoring and maintenance activities.

Past Success – Applicant has a proven track record of success in implementing conservation practices with specific, measurable results.

OTHER

Budget – Costs are allowable, reasonable and budgeted in accordance with NFWF’s [Budget Instructions](#) cost categories. Federally-funded projects must be in compliance with [OMB Uniform Guidance](#) as applicable.

Procurement – If the applicant chooses to specifically identify proposed Contractor(s) for Services, an award by NFWF to the applicant does not constitute NFWF’s express written authorization for the applicant to procure such specific services noncompetitively. When procuring goods and services, NFWF recipients must follow documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable laws and regulations.

Publicity and Acknowledgement of Support – Award recipients will be required to grant NFWF the right and authority to publicize the project and NFWF’s financial support for the grant in press releases, publications and other public communications. Recipients may also be asked by NFWF to provide high-resolution (minimum 300 dpi) photographs depicting the project.

Receiving Award Funds – Award payments are primarily reimbursable. Projects may request funds for reimbursement at any time after completing a signed agreement with NFWF. A request of an advance of funds must be due to an imminent need of expenditure and must detail how the funds will be used and provide justification and a timeline for expected disbursement of these funds.

Compliance Requirements – Projects selected may be subject to requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act (state and federal), and National Historic Preservation Act. Documentation of compliance with these regulations must be approved prior to initiating activities that disturb or alter habitat or other features of the project site(s). Applicants should budget time and resources to obtain the needed approvals. As may be applicable, successful applicants may be required to comply with additional Federal, state or local requirements and obtain all necessary permits and clearances.

Permits – Successful applicants will be required to provide sufficient documentation that the project expects to receive or has received all necessary permits and clearances to comply with any Federal, state or local requirements. Where projects involve work in the waters of the United States, NFWF strongly encourages applicants to conduct a permit pre-application meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers prior to submitting their proposal. In some cases, if a permit pre-application meeting has not been completed, NFWF may require successful applicants to complete such a meeting prior to grant award.

Federal Funding – The availability of federal funds estimated in this solicitation is contingent upon the federal appropriations process. Funding decisions will be made based on level of funding and timing of when it is received by NFWF.

Special Instructions: Explanation of how Project Supports DoD Mission Objectives – For LITs whose SGA include military bases or installations, applications must demonstrate how proposed projects will support DoD’s mission objectives and complete the [DoD Questionnaire](#) provided as an Upload in Easygrants.



TIMELINE

Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the Program page of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information: [Longleaf Stewardship Fund](#).

Applicant Webinar:	Tuesday, December 18 th , 2:00pm Eastern Standard Time
Full Proposal Due Date:	Thursday, February 7th, 2019, 11:59pm Eastern Standard Time
Review Period:	February – August 2019
Awards Announced:	August 2019

HOW TO APPLY

All application materials must be submitted online through National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Easygrants system.

1. Go to easygrants.nfwf.org to register in our Easygrants online system. New users to the system will be prompted to register before starting the application (if you already are a registered user, use your existing login). Enter your applicant information.
2. Once on your homepage, click the "Apply for Funding" button and select this RFP's "Funding Opportunity" from the list of options.
3. Follow the instructions in Easygrants to complete your application. Once an application has been started, it may be saved and returned to at a later time for completion and submission.

APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

A PDF version of this RFP can be downloaded at [Longleaf Stewardship Fund](#).

A *Tip Sheet* is available for quick reference while you are working through your application. This document can be downloaded at [Longleaf Stewardship Fund](#).

Additional information to support the application process can be accessed on the NFWF website's [Applicant Information](#) page.

For more information or questions about this RFP, please contact:

Jon Scott

Southern Forests Program Director

(202) 595-2609

jonathan.scott@nfwf.org

For issues or assistance with our online Easygrants system, please contact:

Easygrants Helpdesk

Email: Easygrants@nfwf.org

Voicemail: 202-595-2497

Hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm ET, Monday-Friday.

Include: your name, proposal ID #, e-mail address, phone number, program you are applying to, and a description of the issue.